Kurt Baschwitz
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International Role

For a number of reasons, some also discussed in the introduction, there is a tendency to limit Baschwitz’s significance to a purely local level (Amsterdam), or a national level (The Netherlands). But he also contributed decisively to the emergence of wider networks in the new field: first on a continental level, than on a global one. This remained largely invisible, also because it played out just before his retirement, during the process itself and even after it, under his successor on the main press chair. So there is reason to spell out what really happened.

Building European networks

At the outset, there had been one huge non-European country with which Baschwitz hoped to build ‘special relations’ – even though Indonesia's post-war independence struggle and its aftermath first provoked a succession of ups and downs in traditional ties with The Netherlands, and then a rupture. Some of his students were of Indonesian descent, worked as representatives for new post-colonial Indonesian institutions in The Netherlands, and/or planned to go back after completing their university and other studies.1

Baschwitz specially wrote a practical thirty-page brochure to introduce various aspects of ‘the newspaper’. It was translated from German into Dutch, and then into the local Indonesian language Malay.2 But plans to publish one of his bigger works did not get off the ground. Plans for the training of journalists from the Antara news agency and other exchange projects did not go very far either.3

Because of his special position, Baschwitz hardly had Ph.D. students, furthermore. One late exception was Abdus Salam Kurshid, who did a Ph.D. thesis with him titled ‘Newsletters in the Orient: With special reference to the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent’. He also became a founding member of the International Association for Mass Communication Research – to which we will return below. After his return home, he became head of

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2 Introductory brochure on newspapers: Surat – Kaber 1955 (file 175).
3 Press agency: file 38.
the Department of Journalism at the university of the Punjab in Lahore, Pakistan.  

But how did Baschwitz and his department meanwhile fit into the newly emerging European networks concerning newspaper and press studies, mass communication and media research, opinion and attitude surveys? Since the U.S. and U.K. shared a language and many publications, new American social science innovations and applications had continued to reach Britain throughout the war. It was the European continent, by contrast, that lagged behind and needed to catch up.

Baschwitz himself was not much of a polyglot, but most of his Dutch colleagues and assistants had learned three major foreign languages in school at the time. The Low Lands had traditionally consisted of small countries and neutral meeting grounds between their much larger neighbours Britain, France, and Germany. So Baschwitz and his department soon began to reach out, establishing contacts and organizing exchanges with similar institutions elsewhere, such as the university at Leuven/Louvain in Belgium, or a journalism school in Lille in Northern France.

By far the most important, however, were Baschwitz’s efforts to re-establish relations with pre-war newspaper colleagues and early ‘press scientists’ in Germany. Baschwitz had not occupied a university chair in Germany and had gone into exile – and was thus untainted by any type of contact with the Nazis. Nor was he in any way involved in the ongoing dramatic split between the capitalist German Federal Republic and the communist German Democratic Republic (officially founded in 1949).

In contrast, many others had had to make compromises during and after the war, to varying degrees. Some also felt that Germans were treated as more or less toxic by the Germanophobic post-war outside world. Baschwitz was the ideal figure to reach out to them; his soft-spoken and diplomatic demeanour helped a great deal. 

4 In later years, many Ph.D. students from developing countries saw their doctoral dissertations supervised by a special professor of International Communication, Cees Hamelink, who also became a key figure within the IAMCR.

5 Two of his closest colleagues were Walter Hagemann in Münster and Emil Dovifat in Berlin. Baschwitz was asked to replace Hagemann after a crisis in Münster, but helped send his Groningen colleague Henk Prakke instead (more in the final parts of Anschlag, p. 97–99). Also see: Ebels-Dolanová, p. 185-186, 203.
From ‘publicistics’ to ‘mass communication’

In both The Netherlands and Germany, the label and definitions for the discipline were shifting. Halfway through the evolution from ‘press studies’ to ‘communication science’, a widely used label was ‘publicistics’ – which covered anything concerned with the making public of information.

Bascwitz was instrumental in convening a first international conference at the Bad Godesberg spa in the spring of 1951, then a major press centre under Allied supervision next to the provisional new West German capital Bonn. The conference had 16 participants: not only from Germany, but also from three neighbouring countries. They decided to found an ‘International Society for Publicistics’ (at first mostly with German-speakers). Among the key figures were Baschwitz from Amsterdam, Folke Dahl from Swedish Göteborg, and Karl Weber from Swiss Zürich.

A year later, in German Münster (close to the Dutch border), there were also representatives from Britain, Belgium, Austria, and Indonesia. Yet another year later, in Amsterdam itself – the official seat of the society – there were representatives from the U.S. and France as well. There is a nice group picture of that meeting in late May 1953, taken before the central entrance at the interior square of the main university building at the Oude Manhuis Poort.

An accompanying note in the archives is apparently not entirely complete. It says that standing, from left to right, are: Khouw Giok Po (Jakarta), William E. Porter (Univ. Iowa), Fr. Klauck (?), Wilmont Haacke (Münster), Claude Bellanger (Paris), Emil Dovifat (Berlin), Lili (Couvée-) Jampoller (Amsterdam), Robert Hennart (Lille), Edgar Stern-Rubarth (London), Jacoba De Boer (Amsterdam), and Philip F. Griffin (Univ. California).

Sitting: Leonidas Martinides (Vienna), R.F. Sujud (Jakarta), Walter Hagemann (Münster), Kurt Baschwitz (Amsterdam), Rolf Meyer (Munich), Maarten Schneider (Amsterdam), Raymond Manévy (Paris), and Theo Luykx (Ghent). Philippe Desjardins from UNESCO (Paris) apparently came as well, to reinforce the link between the organizations.

Other participants apparently not in the picture were E. Diemer (Amsterdam), W. Hermanns (Aachen), Leo G.A. Schlichting (Nijmegen), and Nabor/Urbain De Volder (Leuven/Louvain). Folke Dahl (Göteborg) had had to cancel. Members K. d’Ester (Munich), R. Henry-Gréard (Science Po, Paris), and M. Stijns (Brussels) apparently were not able to make it.

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6 Conference picture in the Baschwitz archives, Special collections, University Library, Amsterdam. Also reproduced in Ebels-Dolanová, between pages 175 & 176, and Anschlag, p. 86.
Participants from eight countries came to the 1953 conference, when Baschwitz’s International Society for Publicistics was at its peak (further details in text). They prepared the launch of the scholarly journal Gazette, already called upon Unesco in Paris to take the lead in founding (what was to become) the International Association of Mass Communication Research. Its secretariat was to be hosted in Amsterdam.

either. It was a key meeting for the emergence of a European science of mass communication and media studies.

The fourth and last conference, held in West Berlin, also had an Italian representative, but the number of participants and countries dropped. At this point, the dissensions within Germany intensified; whereas plans for a purely German or at least Germanophone society of ‘publicistics’ got priority. Germany had really split up now, and Baschwitz was to retire within only a few years time. That seemed to be the end of the original group. (More details can be found in the last parts of Anschlag’s master’s thesis, which also provides neat overviews of the themes and participants of all four meetings).
Around the mid-1950s, the new field had slowly begun to emerge in almost all European countries, not only in the northwest of the continent, but also in the south and east, albeit in many different incarnations. But there was still a lack of initiatives to weld them all together through ongoing discussions and one or more publication series. There was an urgent need for an international academic journal for the new discipline.

So, from the very first ‘publicistics’ meetings onwards, Baschwitz and other key participants had also been discussing the founding of such a journal for the new field. The initial proposed name was Publica, but the ultimate name hewed closer to the original newspaper studies. Though Baschwitz’s introduction emphasized that it extended to ‘public opinion, propaganda, advertising’ on the one hand, and to ‘other mass media such as the radio, television and film’ on the other.

In 1955, then, the first issue of the quarterly Gazette International or simply Gazette (after the 17th century term for newspapers) came out – as a Journal for the Science of the Press. It is still in existence today, now published by Sage and devoted to the broader field of communication. Its headquarters were in Amsterdam; Baschwitz’s friend Posthumus (who had meanwhile moved on to become an editor at Brill academic publishers) agreed to bring it out. In true Dutch tradition, it started out as a trilingual journal. Most articles were in English, but some were in German or French, with an added English abstract. Over the years, however, the emphasis shifted further – also to cover both broadcasting and other continents.

The new journal was meant to accelerate the take-off of the new field all around, and did so in various ways. First, its issues carried a broad bibliography of new publications in the field, as well as periodic overviews of the main literature on a specific theme. Second, it published special country issues on the occasion of the annual conferences of the International Press Institute (IPI), a newly founded organization of media executives and editors, later extended to journalists. Today, Gazette has a board and editors, contributors and articles, from all over the world.  

Vroons.

Wieten. It also quotes a content analysis demonstrating the gradual widening of the journal’s focus to various types of media, geographical areas, etc.
Amsterdam, *The Gazette* journal, and the worldwide IAMCR

Baschwitz had primarily built his original network from Germanophone connections. But from the mid-1950s onwards, the emphasis had begun to shift to the other major language area on the European continent: the Francophone one. After the war, the United Nations set up its educational, scientific, and cultural organization UNESCO in Paris. The director of the French Information Ministry had taken the lead in building a strong Francophone network of press organizations and publications, together with the Francophone Belgians and Swiss. UNESCO had also begun to foster exchanges in the field of journalism education and press studies.

Baschwitz’s Amsterdam conference had already passed a resolution calling on UNESCO to take the lead in promoting further exchanges, and offering the Amsterdam Press Institute as a liaison office. The late 1956 general conference of UNESCO in New Delhi indeed called for ‘the establishment of an international association’ to coordinate research in mass communication. It was immediately followed by the establishment of an ‘International Centre for Higher Education in Journalism’ in Strasbourg. In late 1957, this centre was opened with a major conference on the subject, where Baschwitz presented a paper.

Several of the participants of the Strasbourg conference hastened back to Paris and founded the International Association of Mass Communication Research (IAMCR) on Christmas Eve. Its first international conference took place in Milan, Italy, in October 1959. The official headquarters remained in Paris, but after some hesitation it took up Baschwitz’s offer to host its secretariat at the Amsterdam Press Institute. Its director was thus also to edit the official IAMCR bulletin – as a supplement to the *Gazette*, which had been adopted as an IAMCR journal. These roles, however, now fell to Prof. Maarten Rooij, Baschwitz’s immediate successor for the main press chair. Today, the IAMCR has flourished into the major global organization in the field, with some two thousand members all around the world.9

Upon his retirement, therefore, Baschwitz had every reason to feel satisfied. He had helped lay the Dutch, Western European, and world foundations for the new discipline: first in newspaper and press studies, then in ‘publicistics’, and finally in ‘mass communication’ studies. After many false

9 See the overview article about the history of the IAMCR by Cees Hamelink and Kaarle Nordenstreng. Originally published in a special issue of the Spanish journal *Disertaciones* on ‘Communication research’ and its history, edited by Miguel Vicente and Manuel Martinez Nicolas. But with a complete English translation and further details on the IAMCR website.
starts and eternal delays, he had finally become a true founding father, and left a lasting heritage.

Retirement

In 1956, the revered social democratic Dutch Prime Minister Willem Drees had introduced a new general retirement scheme (AOW), and the retirement age was gradually reduced to 65. But Baschwitz had not even had the opportunity to complete the minimum requirement of ten full years of paying contributions to receive a university pension. His regular employment had only officially started on 1 October 1946 (and even then only retroactively).

After his naturalization as a Dutch citizen in 1955, he turned seventy on 2 February 1956. At the time, 70 was still the regular retirement age for professors; but as the nomination of his successor lagged, he was given two more years before being 'honourably discharged'. The 'calculation base' for a university pension would later become the average of the last three annual salaries, which would have amounted to 18,129.92 guilders for his rank. He would then have received something like 70 percent of that, if he had been employed for an entire forty-year career. Or a quarter of it for a ten-year career, the minimum threshold – that is to say, some 3,161 guilders.

But his career had officially only covered 9 years, 11 months, and 16 days. So – according to his youngest daughter – he had no formal right to a substantial pension at all.10 The university authorities tried to accommodate him in two ways, however. On the one hand, they allowed him to continue to teach a few courses (until he later had a stroke). On the other, they asked him to make successive evaluations of the ‘possible shortcomings’ of the entire press program, for a fee of 5,000 guilders per year. He may also have received some income from his various other press roles.11

On the eve of his seventieth birthday, he had demanded and gotten a meeting in Bonn with the first president of West Germany: the prominent liberal Theodor Heuss, who had been a similar-minded Ph.D. student colleague in

10 Quoted in Ebels-Dolanová, p. 189.
11 File ‘Documents’, with contract letters, in a box recently added to the Baschwitz archives.
Baschwitz’s Munich days almost half a century earlier. Upon a later birthday, furthermore, he received official congratulations from the leadership of the German SPD, including Willy Brandt: later chancellor, the initiator of the Ostpolitik with regard to the communist East, and a world historic figure.

Baschwitz’s 70th birthday was officially celebrated a year late – and his de facto retirement a year early – with a grand January 1957 reception at the ‘International Cultural Centre’ in Amsterdam’s main Vondelpark. The gathering probably gave him great satisfaction, as it highlighted his achievements after so many decades of never-ending struggles.

The capital’s alderman for education gave a major speech, and the mayor and secretary of the small town of Oudewater (of the aforementioned witches’ weighing house) were also present. Luminaries from all over the Netherlands were there, as well as representatives from all the major trade organizations in his field. Some foreign colleagues had even come for the occasion, sometimes from far abroad.

At the reception, political science professor Barents offered him the first copy of a liber amicorum (Latin for the traditional gift of a book specially written and composed by one’s academic friends and colleagues for the occasion). It had an introduction by his Nijmegen counterpart Leo Schlichting, and included some fifteen capita selecta (or ‘chosen chapters’) about various aspects of ‘Press, propaganda and public opinion’, contributed by other colleagues and staff. Most dealt with history; one, by his assistants Marten Brouwer and Hans Daudt, was a highly programmatic reflection on the near future of the field of mass communication.

They noted that the field had gradually expanded to cover radio, television, film, and other media as well. They repeated that the uniqueness of Baschwitz’s approach had always been the study of mass communication and mass psychology together. Although they consented that ‘visible’ masses (crowds and mobs) had a logic that partially differed from that of ‘invisible’ masses (audiences and publics), they argued that social and psychological interaction provided the key to both. Audiences and the public were often not static, furthermore, and could occasionally even become highly dynamic (for instance in what were later labelled ‘hypes and scares’).

They also discussed the differences between the continental European and the American traditions, between the old qualitative and the new quantitative approaches. They tried to distinguish and redefine various relevant notions. They pleaded for more systematic (quantitative) empirical

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12 The meeting was on 3 December 1955, at 11.30. According to correspondence with the embassy, in the Baschwitz archives, XXXII A9, interior file 1.
research, and reviewed a wide range of newly developed methods. Their ‘literature’ list at the end referred to four of Baschwitz’s titles, as well as some fifty others.

Of these, only around ten were in Dutch, and more than forty were in English. They included all the most famous post-war American scholars and handbooks: on opinions and attitudes, persuasion and propaganda, social and mass psychology, journalism and media. Gordon Allport, Bernard Berelson, Herbert Blumer, Clyde Coombs, Morton Deutsch, Leonard Doob, Leon Festinger, Carl Hovland and associates, Herbert Hyman, Elihu Katz, Harold Lasswell and associates, Paul Lazarsfeld, Gardner Lindzey, Gardner Murphy and associates, Wilbur Schramm, Samuel Stouffer, Norbert Wiener, and Kimball Young – the whole new package was embraced. This marked a ‘sea change’ in the field in The Netherlands.